

Evaluative Feedback

Evaluative feedback sums up achievement and assigns a label. It expresses a judgment.

- Grades—A, B, C, D, F
- Letters—P for *proficient*, D for *developing*, B for *beginning*
- Numbers—4 for *exceeds standard*, 3 for *meets standard*, 2 for *approaching standard*, 1 for *does not meet standard*
- Words—Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor
- Other symbols—smiley faces, stars, pluses, checks, minuses, etc.
- Written comments—good work, needs work
- Stickers—Great Job! Awesome! Super!

Feedback that expresses approval or disapproval about the achievement or the student also falls into the category of evaluative feedback.

We often assign evaluative feedback to all work, even that which is for practice. Not only is this not necessary, it is in many instances counterproductive.

Descriptive Feedback

Descriptive feedback offers information about the work, product, or performance relative to the intended learning. *Effective* descriptive feedback has the following characteristics:

- Is value neutral—avoids praise or blame
- Focuses on the intended learning
- Shows where the work is right or wrong and why
- Pinpoints strengths and identifies areas for improvement in terms of the intended learning
- Takes into account the amount of corrective information the learner can act on at one time
- Models the kind of thinking students will engage in when they self-assess
- Can be used by students to take action to improve
- Does not cause the learner to shut down

RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTS OF FEEDBACK ON STUDENT LEARNING

The **QUALITY** of the feedback rather than its existence or absence is what determines its power. (Bangert-Downs, Kulik, Kulik, & Morgan, 1991; Sadler, 1989)

Effective learners operate best when they have insight into their own strengths and weaknesses and access to their own repertoires of strategies for learning. (Brown, 1994)

Feedback is most effective when it points out success and is designed to stimulate correction of errors relevant to the task. (Bloom)

Effective feedback points out successes and gives specific information about how to improve the performance or product. (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Black, et al, 2002; bloom, 1989; Brown, 1994)

Feedback is effective when it offers information about progress relative to the intended learning goal and about what action to take to reach the intended learning goal. (Hattie & Timperley, 2005)

Comments directed to the quality of the work--what was done well and what needs improving--increase student interest in the task and level of achievement. (Butler, 1988)

Teachers' feedback to pupils seems to serve social and managerial functions, often at the expense of the learning function. (Black & Wiliam, 1998)

Frequently feedback is used to push students to "do more" or to "do better," without being specific enough to help students know what to do. This type of feedback is generally ineffective. (Hattie & Timperley, 2005)

Research shows that feedback that emphasizes learning goals leads to greater learning gains than feedback that emphasizes self-esteem. (Ames, 1992; Butler, 1998; Dweck, 1986)

When receiving feedback emphasizing self-esteem, high-performing students often attribute their performance to effort and low-performing students attribute their performance to lack of ability. (Butler & Newman, 1995; Cameron & Pierce, 1994; Kluger & deNisi, 1996)

Feedback that cues the individual to direct attention to *self* (praise, effort, etc.) rather than to the *quality of the task* appears to have a negative effect on learning. Many studies speak to effective teachers praising less than average. (Cameron/Pierce, 1994; Kluger & DiNisi, 1996)

With regard to feedback, research makes the case for the use of descriptive, criterion-based feedback as opposed to numerical scoring or letter grades without clear criteria. (Butler & Neuman, 1995; Cameron & Pierce, 1994; Kluger & deNisi, 1996)

Feedback is effective when it addresses partial understanding. When student work demonstrates lack of understanding, feedback will not help. (Hattie & Timperley, 2005)

When providing feedback about what to do differently, focus on three key questions (Elawar and Corno, 1985):

- What is the key error?
- What is the probable reason why the student made the error?
- How can I guide the student to avoid the error in the future?

The giving of marks and the grading function are overemphasized, while the giving of useful advice and the learning function are underemphasized. (Black & Wiliam, 1998)

Intensive correction, where the teacher marks every error in every paper a student writes, is completely useless. Marking all errors is no more advantageous in terms of student growth than marking none of them. (Hillocks, 1986)

Grading every piece of homework is misdirected. A numerical grade does not show students how to improve their work. Further, students ignore comments when grades are given. (Butler, 1998)

When teachers substituted comments for grades, students engaged more productively in improving their work. (Black, et al, 2002)

CONCLUSION

Effective feedback

- Describes features of work or performance
- Relates directly to the learning targets and/or standards of quality
- Points out strengths and gives specific information about how to improve